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WIFE

TORONTO;
R. B. BUTLAND, PUBLISHER,
37 King Street West.

THE WIFE

A TALE OF MANTUA

A Play

IN FIVE ACTS

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES

Author of "Virginius," "The Hunchback," &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,

THEATRICAL PUBLISHER,

LONDON.

Characters.

MARIANA	Miss Ellen Tree.
FLORIBEL	Miss Sidney.
LEONARDO GONZAGA } *Princes of*	Mr. C. Kean.
FERRARDO GONZAGA } *Mantua*	Mr. Warde.
COUNT FLORIO	Mr. Diddear.
JULIAN ST. PIERRE	Mr. Sheridan Knowles.
ANTONIO (*a Curate*)	Mr. G. Bennett.
LORENZO (*an Advocate of Rome*)	Mr. Abbott.
HUGO (*Guardian to Mariana*)	Mr. Ransford.
BARTOLO	Mr. Meadows.
BERNARDO	Mr. Turnour.
CARLO	Mr. Barnes.
MARCO	Mr. Henry.
PIETRO	Mr. Payne.
STEPHANO	Mr. J. Cooper.
FIRST LORD	Mr. Irwin.
ADVOCATE OF MANTUA	Mr. Haines.
FIRST OFFICER	Mr. T. Matthews.
SECOND OFFICER	Mr. Mears.
COURIER	Mr. Heath.

Scene—*Mantua; afterwards the Camp.*

Costumes.

Leonardo.—*First Dress*:—Plain dark shirt, tights, low boots, and cap.—*Second Dress*:—Black cloak and square cap.—*Third Dress*:—Rich shirt, ermine robe.—*Fourth Dress*:—Handsome shirt, belt, sword, and dagger—armour is sometimes (but improperly) worn in the last act.

Ferrardo.—*First Dress*:—Embroidered shirt, ermine robe, hat and feathers.—*Second Dress*:—Short embroidered cloak.

Florio.—Handsome shirt, cloak, &c.

St. Pierre.—*First Dress*:—Dark doublet, trunks, boots and hat, much worn.—*Second Dress*:—Short handsome shirt, silk scarf, red tights, hat and red feather, short boots and spurs,—the whole of a military character.

Antonio.—Long black merino shirt and robe, scull cap, and grey hair.

Lorenzo.—*First Dress*:—Plain black shirt, tights, and square cap.—*Second Dress*:—Black robe.

Nobles.—Rich shirts and mantles.

Citizens.—Plain ditto ditto

Mariana.—*First Dress*:—Very neat Swiss dress.—*Second Dress*:—Handsome white satin.—*Third Dress*:—Velvet and ermine robe, tiara and jewels.—*Fourth Dress*:—White muslin.—*Fifth Dress*:—Travelling cloak.

Floribel.—Plain white silk dress, slashed with blue satin.

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THE WIFE:

A TALE OF MANTUA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Mantua.*

Enter LEONARDO CONZAGA *and* LORENZO, L. 2 E.

LEO. So, in my native city, thanks to heaven,
Ten years and more elapsed, I stand again!
A boy it sent me forth, takes back a man.
Hail to it! 'Tis mine old acquaintance still,
In nothing strange—unaltered! To a stone
The same I left it! Glad am I to see it—
None better loves its venerable face!

LOR. I'm glad to see you smile.

LEO. I do so, signor.
I am a boy again! The days come back
When smallest things made wealth of happiness
And ever were at hand! when I did watch
With panting heart the striking of the clock,
Which hardly sounded ere the book was shut.
Then for the race—the leap—the game—O signor,
The vigour and endurance of such joy!
Is't e'er to come again? And care so light,
That, looking back, you smile you thought it care,
And call it part of pleasure! I'm again
In Mantua! (*crosses*, L.)

LOR. Then here we say farewell.

LEO. Not so; acquaintance, born and nurtured in
Adversity, is worth the cherishing:

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'Tis proved steel which one may trust one's life to.
You are a stranger here in Mantua,
Which I am native to. What brings you hither?
If 'tis a cause no scruple of just weight
Forbids thee to unfold, unbosom thee,
And in return for what thou part'st with, take
The zeal and honour of a hearty friend,
And service too, to boot;—you pause, from doubt
Either of my ability or faith.
If this, I'm sorry for't—If that take heed.
You know not by the eye, the practis'd limb
Where the inform'd and active sinew lies,
That's equal to the feat. What, silent still!
'Sdeath man! a dwarf is not to be despis'd,
For he may have a giant for his friend,
And so be master of a giant's strength.
Come, come, have confidence;—'tis the free rein
Which takes the willing courser o'er the leap
He'd miss if you did check him!

LOR. There are men
Whose habits in abeyance hold their natures
Which still remain themselves.—Your temperament
Is of the sanguine kind,—and so is mine,
But lo, the difference! Thy frankness brooks
No pause—thy wish is scarce conceived ere told—
And if men's hearts were open as their looks,
And trust were due to all. The law hath been
My study, signor! and, these three years past,
My practice too; and it hath taught me this:—
To doubt, with openness to be convinced,
Is to remain on this side danger, yet
No fraction lack of generosity
Which it becomes a noble mind to cherish.

LEO. And doubt you me?

LOR. No, signor; but drew back,
When you with instant promptness did advance
Where I, with all the heart to take the step,
Had still, I fear, been standing. You shall know
My errand hither. I am nephew—

LEO. Stop
Till these pass on!

Enter BARTOLO, CARLO, BERNARDO, *and others*, R. 2 E.

CAR. Will not the Duke postpone the cause?

BAR. I tell thee no.

CAR. And wherefore?

BAR. What's that to thee?—Is not he the Duke? Shall such a piece of flesh and bone as thou art, question the Duke?

CAR. Why not?

BAR. Why not! Would any one believe he had been born in Mantua? Now mark how I will answer him! Dost thou drink Burgundy?

CAR. No, but water.

BAR. Then art thou, compared to the great Duke, what water is to Burgundy.

CAR. He is but flesh and blood.

BAR. But what kind of flesh and blood? Answer me that! Wouldst thou, that dinest upon garlic and coarse bread, and washest them down with water, compare thyself to one who sits down every day of the week to a table of three courses? Thou art no more than a head of garlic to the Duke!

BER. Say on, Bartolo! Well! The Duke refuses to postpone the cause; and what then?

BAR. Why then the case must come on.

BER. And what will be the end on't?

BAR. That knows the Duke.

CAR. But what ought it to be?

BAR. What the great Duke wills.

CAR. Why so?

BAR. Because that must be!

BER. She was a bold girl, when they forced her to the church, to refuse to give her hand there, and claim the protection of the curate.

BAR. He was a bolder man to have anything to say to so mettlesome a piece of stuff.

CAR. And to refuse a Count!

BAR. Her cause will not thrive the better for that, unless, indeed, the Duke be wroth with the Count, for honourably affecting a commissary's ward.

LEO. (*aside*) You seem intent on their discourse.

LOR. I am so.

BER. You saw her, Bartolo, did you not?

BAR. Yes, I was passing by when they were forcing her into the church, and followed them in.

CAR. Is she as handsome as they say?

BAR. Humph!—handsome!—handsome is this, and handsome is that. I could sooner tell the absence of beauty than the presence of it. Now thou art not beautiful, but dress thee like a duke, and it might change thee. Thou that art an ugly craftsman, might become a beautiful duke. Notwithstanding I think I dare pronounce her handsome—very handsome! nay, I will go further, and confess that, where she a countess, or a duchess, I would call her the most beautiful woman in Mantua.

BER. But why wishes the curate to have the cause postponed?

BAR. To wait for a learned doctor of the law, for whom he has sent to Rome, but who has not yet arrived, though hourly looked for.

CAR. What! must one send for law to Rome?

BAR. Yes, if one cannot find it in Mantua.

CAR. Cannot one find law in Mantua?

BAR. Not if it be all bought up. There's not a legal man of note whom the count has not retained; so was the curate forced to send for his nephew to Rome—a man, it is reported, of great learning, and of profound skill in his profession, though hardly yet out of his nonage.

LEO. (*aside*) You colour, signor! 'tis of you he speaks.

CAR. Fears he come to Mantua, or what?

BAR. 'Tis thought the brigands have detained him—a plague upon the rascals! A word in your ears, signors. You all know that Bartolo is a loyal man.

ALL. We do, Bartolo.

BAR. Said I ever a word against the Duke?

ALL. No!

BAR. You are right, signors: nor would I, though the Duke were to hang every honest man in Mantua, for is he not the Duke?—and is not Bartolo a loyal man! Now if I speak of the Duke's cousin. whom the

brigands, they say, have killed, speak I against the Duke?

ALL. No.

BAR. Is't a treason to say "a pity that he was killed?"

ALL. No!

BAR. Ah, signors, had he succeeded his father, he would have made a proper Duke. Is this saying anything against his cousin that is the Duke?

ALL. No!

BAR. I warrant me, no! Catch Bartolo talking treason! Who says a word against the Duke? He dies, as Bartolo is a loyal man. But fare you well, signors. The trial comes on at noon—and noon will soon be here.

BER. We go your way.

BAR. Come on, then. Remember I said not a word against the Duke.

Exeunt BARTOLO *and others*, L. 1 E.

LEO. (L. C.) Of you he spoke—was it not so?

LOR. It was.

LEO. You come to Mantua to plead the cause
Of this fair damsel. You were here before,
But that the brigands intercepted you,—
Your hurt, but my advantage, whose escape,
Long time their captive, you contriv'd. And now,
To prove my friendship more than wordy vaunting;—
I have the power to serve you. Take me with you.
Your clerk, you said, opposing vain resistance
The hot-brained robber slew. Suppose me him:
I have a smattering of his vocation,
A notion of the mystery of yours;
And I would hear, by their own lips recited,
This worthy priest and beauteous damsel's cause,
For reasons which—you smile.

LOR. A thought did cross me.

LEO. I know thy thought—'tis wrong!—'Tis not the heat
Of youthful blood which prompts—you smile again.

LOR. Your pardon.—If I did, you have to thank
The quickness of your apprehension.

LEO. Mark me!—
I have loved my last—and that love was my first!

A passion like a seedling that did spring,
Whose germ the winds had set; of stem so fine,
And leaf so small, to inexperienced sight
It passed for nought,—until, with swelling trunk,
And spreading branches, bowing all around,
It stood a goodly tree! Are you content?
This was my sadness, signor, which the sight
Of my dear native city banished;
Which thy misgiving hath brought back again;
And which will be the clothing of my heart,
While my heart calls this breast of mine its house.

LOR. I pray you, pardon me!

LEO. I pray you, peace!
Time presses.—Once again, have confidence,
And take me with you to your uncle's home.
More than you credit me, I may bestead you.
Wilt take my hand?

LOR. I will!

LEO. Have with you, then!

Exeunt, R. 1 E.

SCENE II.—*Antonio's House.*

Enter ANTONIO *and* PIETRO, R. 1 E.

ANT. What lacks it now of noon?

PIE. An hour or more.

ANT. No chance of his arrival?—This delay
Perplexes me! Is it neglect?—I thought
His answer would have been his presence here,
Prompt as my summons; yet he neither comes
Nor sends excuse. 'Tis very strange!

PIE. Fails he to come, for whom
Your reverence looks, to plead the damsel's cause,
Must it perforce go on?

ANT. It must; and I
Myself will be her advocate, before
The haughty Duke. For problems of deep law,
Will give him axioms of plain truth, and paint
Her thrilling grievance to the life with tears,—
Which, pity seeing, shall to every heart

That owns her gentle influence, commend,
And gather tears to aid them.

Enter STEPHANO, L. 1 E.

STE. May it please you,
Two strangers, craving audience, wait below.
ANT. Admit them!

Exit STEPHANO, L. 1. E.

'Tis my nephew! Worthy Pietro,
Have all readiness that we appear
Before the Duke when cited.

Exit PIETRO, R. 1 E.

Enter LORENZO, GONZAGO, *and* LEONARDO, L. 1 E.

So, Lorenzo!
LOR. Save you, my reverend uncle!
ANT. Now a week
I've looked for you—but waive we explanations.
Thou'rt come:—and to the business that has brought thee.
I have possessed thee of the damsel's cause
In all its bearings—art prepared to plead it?
LOR. I am, so please your rev'rence;—but, with us
That evidence is best which is direct.
That the Count Florio seeks the damsel's hand,—
That wills her guardian she should give it him,—
That she resists her uncle and the count,—
I know, but not the cause of her dissent.
Children to guardians do obedience owe;
A match so lofty warrants some enforcement,
Which, not on slight grounds, should the maid resist.
ANT. Ground know I none, save strong aversion.
LOR. Pray you
Vouchsafe us conference with the maid herself.
Her deposition shall this gentleman
That's come with me—my trusty clerk—set down.
I'll bring her to you;—but, I charge you, boy,
You keep in mind you are her advocate.
For she, indeed, of those rare things of earth,
Which of the debt that's due to it, rob heaven,
ANT. That men set earth before it, is the rarest!

Then guard thee, nephew !—rather with thine ears
And tongue discourse with her, than with thine eyes,
Lest thou forget it was her cause, not she,
That summon'd thee to Mantua !

LOR. Fear me not !

Exit ANTONIO, R. 1 E.

LEO. A service of some danger, it should seem,
Your rev'rend uncle has engaged you in;
And, by his pardon, for your safety, takes
Means which your peril rather do enhance.
The soldier that is taught to fear his foe,
Is half o'ercome before he takes the field.

LOR. Is't from your own misgivings you doubt me ?

LEO. No :—as I said before, my heart is safe—
Love proof, with love ! which, if it be not, signor,
A passion that can only once be felt—
Hath but one object—lives and dies with us—
And, while it lives, remains itself, while all
Attachments else keep changing—it is nothing !
I used to laugh at love and deem it fancy ;
My heart would choose its mistress by mine eyes,
Whom scarce they found ere my heart sought a new one.
I knew not then the 'haviour of the soul—
How that's the loveliness which it doth lodge,
A world beyond the loveliness of form !
I found it ! when or where—for weal or woe—
It matters not ! I found it ! wedded it !
Never to be divorc'd from that true love
Which taught me what love was !

LOR. You wedded it ?—
Then was your passion blest ?

LEO. No, signor, no !
Question no further, prithee ! Here's your uncle !

Enter ANTONIO *leading* MARIANA, R. 1 E.

ANT. Lo, nephew ! here's the maid
To answer for herself !

LOR. (L. C. *to* LEONARDO) She's fair, indeed !
Description ne'er could give her out the thing,
One only glance avows her !—Prithee, look !

LEO. (L.) Show her to him who has not seen the fairest!
Remember, signor, Time's no gazer, but
Doth ever keep his eye upon his road,
His feet in motion;—noon is just at hand.
LOR. I thank you. Note my questions—her replies.
(LEONARDO *goes up and sits at table*)
Your guardian—is he your relation too?
MAR. No,—would he were! That stay had needs be strong.
Which failing, we've no other left to cling to.
LEO. (*at back*) Oh, music!—
LOR. (*goes to him*) What's the matter?
LEO. I did hear
A bird, whose throat did beggar all the grove,
And of its rich and famed minstrel makes
A poor and common chorister!
LOR. Hear *her!*—
You'll have no ear for any other bird;
Look at her, and you'll have no ear for her,
Your tranced vision every other sense
Absorbing!—Gave you promise to the Count?
MAR. None!
LOR. Nor encouragement?
MAR. (R. C.) Such as aversion
Gives to the thing it loathes.
LOR. (C.) Have you a vow
Or promise to another?—that were a plea
To justify rejection. You are silent.
And yet you speak—if blushes speak, as men
Declare they do. Come, come, I know you love.
Give me to know the story of your love!
That, thereupon, I found my proper plea
To shew your opposition not a thing
Of fantasy, caprice, or frowardness,
But that for which all hearers shall commend you,
Proves it the joint result of heart and reason,
Each other's act approving.—Was't in Mantua
You met?
MAR. No, signor, in my native land.
LOR. And that is——
MAR. Switzerland.
LOR. His country too?

MAR. No, signor, he belonged to Mantua.
LOR. That's right—you are collected and direct
In your replies. I dare be sworn your passion
Was such a thing, as by its neigbourhood
Made piety and virtue twice as rich
As e'er they were before. How grew it? Co
Thou know'st thy heart—look calmly into it,
And see how innocent a thing it is
Which thou dost fear to shew.—I wait your an
How grew your passion?
MAR. As my stature grew,
Which rose without my noting it, until
They said I was a woman. I kept watch
Beside what seem'd his death-bed. From bene
An avalanche my father rescued him,
The sole survivor of a company
Who wandered through our mountains. A long
His life was doubtful, signor, and he called
For help, whence help alone could come, which
Morning and night, invok'd along with him.—
So first our souls did mingle!
LOR. I perceive:—
You mingled souls until you mingled hearts?
You lov'd at last.—Was't not the sequel, maid?
MAR. I lov'd indeed! If I but nurs'd a flower
Which to the ground the rain and wind had bea
That flow'r of all our garden was my pride:—
What then was he to me, for whom I thought
To make a shroud, when, tending on him still
With hope, that, baffled still, did still keep up,
I saw at last the ruddy dawn of health
Begin to mantle o'er his pallid form,
And glow—and glow—till forth at last it burst
Into confirmed, broad, and glorious day!
LOR. You loved, and he did love?
MAR. To say he did,
Were to affirm what oft his eyes avouch'd,
What many an action testified—and yet—
What wanted confirmation of his tongue.
But if he loved—it brought him not content!
'Twas now abstraction—now a start—anon

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